

CHAPTER X.X.X.

GUIDELINES FOR FALLOWING IN AQUACULTURE

Article X.X.X.1.

Introduction

Gaps in aquaculture production at the same location are commonly recognised to be of value in resting or restoring the local environment. As part of this strategy, *fallowing* can break re-infection cycles by removing loci of a *disease* from a farm. Consequently, *fallowing* is often carried out as a regular disease management measure in aquaculture, especially prior to the introduction of new populations of *aquatic animals* into a previously used site. In order to promote improved health in aquaculture, the *Competent Authority* responsible for aquatic animal health in a country may encourage the use of *fallowing* as a routine management strategy for many *diseases*. Account should be taken of the likely beneficial effects of *fallowing* in proportion to the economic costs involved. The *Competent Authority* should also consider such factors as the level of risk to the local and national aquaculture operations, previous knowledge of the severity of a disease(s), the *infective period* and distribution of the *disease agent*(s), the socioeconomic conditions, and benefits pertaining to the general aquatic resources. When the infective period is not known, the farm may be fallowed for the maximum period, based on a risk assessment.

However, where an official *stamping-out policy* is being carried out for a *disease* of concern, the *Competent Authority* should require that an infected *aquaculture establishment*, and all other *aquaculture establishments* in an officially established *infected zone*, be subjected to a required period of *fallowing* if necessary synchronised.

Article X.X.X.2.

Legal powers

In cases where *fallowing* may be a compulsory measure, for instance in the establishment or restoration of a *disease free zone*, countries should establish a legal framework for the implementation of *fallowing* procedures in *aquaculture establishments*. Legal provisions could include:

- a) Defining the disease circumstances when *fallowing* or synchronised fallowing is required.
- b) Defining mechanisms based on *risk assessment* where individual disease-specific measures may be determined, including *disinfection* and the length of the *fallowing* period prior to the re-introduction of *susceptible species*.
- c) Following permission by the *Competent Authority* to restock with *susceptible species*, defining a period of *surveillance* and *diagnosis* to verify freedom from the specified *disease*

Article X.X.X.3.

Technical parameters for the implementation of a statutory fallowing plan

Fallowing of a farm should start immediately after:

- a) removal of all *susceptible species of aquatic animals* for the *disease* of concern and
 - b) removal of all species capable of acting as carriers of the *disease* of concern and
 - c) if appropriate, removal of other species and
 - d) removal of water in which infected stocks have been held, where feasible, and
- [c]e) equipment and other materials contaminated or otherwise capable of harbouring infection have either been removed or subjected to *disinfection* to standards approved by the *Competent Authority*.

The length of the statutory *fallowing* period should be based on scientific evidence of the likelihood of a *disease agent* remaining infective outside its aquaculture host(s) in the local environment, at a level likely to cause an unacceptable risk of re-infection of the *aquaculture establishment*. Account should be taken of the extent of the *disease outbreak*, local availability of alternative hosts, the survival and infectivity characteristics of the *disease agent* and the local climatological, geographical and hydrographical factors. In addition, the level of risk to the local aquaculture industry and wider aquatic resources may be included. A scientifically based risk assessment approach should be used to determine the length of the *fallowing* period[, using qualitative methods when available data are limited, and quantitative analysis to obtain deeper insight when possible].

Article X.X.X.4.

Instructions

Countries establishing *fallowing* procedures should develop a detailed set of instructions for *disinfection* of *aquaculture establishments* prior to *fallowing*. For this purpose, the instructions set out in Section 5.2, Appendices 5.2.2., 5.2.3. and 5.2.4. in this *Code* should be used as guidelines, taking into account current scientific knowledge on the efficacy of the treatments for the *disease agent* of concern.

Article X.X.X.5.

Restocking

[All] No *aquaculture establishment* that has been under compulsory *fallowing* should [not] be restocked until the *fallowing* period has been completed and permission from the *Competent Authority* has been received. When restocking, care should be taken not to use stocks of *aquatic animals* that would compromise the objectives of the *fallowing* procedure.

To increase confidence in the effectiveness of the *fallowing* procedures, all farms subjected to compulsory *fallowing* should have a period of high level official *surveillance* after *susceptible species* have been restocked. The duration and intensity of the *surveillance* should be appropriate for the *disease* of concern and local conditions.